

Papa Stickenstein's Cat

"O CH, himmel, no—no, nein—no! You can't haf Repecca. Must I dell you a dousand dimes no?" Aaron Stickenstein's nose grew fire-red as he became angrier. He spluttered like a splash of water on a red-hot stove; waving his pudgy, though expressive white hands with utmost eloquence of repugnance, repudiation, and finality.

"But why?" asked the more Americanized of the two, Leon Leafgreen, the suitor for the fair Rebecca's hand and heart. "V'y, v'y, v'y, v'y? Dere are more dan a hundred reasons—first, you ain't no good; second, you ain't got no money; third, you nefer vill haf no money; fourth, I don't like you; fifth, Repecca hates de fery sight of you—"

"No," shouted the young man, "no!" then hurriedly closed his mouth again, setting his jaws firmly.

"Ach, she doid me she chust make a vool of you—"

Here Leon, overcome by this last, although he knew its specious nature, rushed out of the little private office, and hurried down a narrow aisle, between towering heaps of gingham, calicoes, and muslins. Half way down the aisle he caught up with someone evidently going in the same direction. It was so dark that he could not see whom it was, but trusted to luck that it was not Mamma Stickenstein or Lena, reached out and grasped whomever it was by the shoulder.

"Leon!" somebody whispered, half reprovingly. "Rebecca!" he murmured in a low jubilant tone—This interesting tableau for fifteen wonderful, beautiful seconds—Then—

"Repecca! Repecca! Come here, vonct, quick!" called the old man from the little office door. Leon temerarily held her a few seconds longer. "Repecca, Repecca!" fairly shouted her autocratic sire, becoming more ireful every moment.

GROWLING but glowing, Leon marched out of the little over-filled shop, and catching a car going around the corner, returned to his lonesome home.

The next day and every day following he called at the Stickenstein Dry Goods Emporium—witness the large gilt letters over the door—but somehow he could obtain no word with Rebecca. Either she was in the office, where he had no wish to call, or she was waiting on some buxom customer, which was nearly as bad, and his spirits sank to zero.

The Friday following the old man's vigorous denial of Leon's pretensions to the hand of Rebecca, the young suitor called as usual, and seeing no signs of her, inquired of one of the clerks of the establishment.

"Ach, the Stickensteins haf gone to New Jersey for the Sabbath and Sunday, and von't be back until Monday, maybe. Mamma Stickenstein and Repecca vent dis afternoon, your o'clock, unt Papa Stickenstein iss going tomorrow efening, eight o'clock, ain'd it. Say dey was dressed up!"



Ach, himmel, nein--no--no, nein, no!"

By Paul De Von



Chake say that Repecca iss trying to make a mash on that fine lkey Moonberg, over dere in Lakewood; he owns five tenements in Brooklyn and has diments as big as hazel-nuts. Say he is a fine looker!"

Gloomily the young man wended his disgusted, disappointed way out of the "emporium" into the throng of homegoers and shoppers.

The next day he curbed all desire to go to the Stickenstein place but in the evening the longing to frequent the accustomed vicinity, (akin no doubt, to the malefactors fascination for the scene of his ill doing) overcame him, and he turned his footsteps in that direction.

When he arrived on the corner opposite to that occupied by the Stickenstein establishment, he heard the rear door of the place slam and the key turn in the lock. In a moment the old man came into the light of the corner, looking furtively about, pulling his over-large derby still further down on his forehead, and buttoning his coat high at the throat. He waited a moment or so and then his car, coming, boarded it and was carried away.

Here Leon sighed a deep sigh of relief. He continued watching the building as if trying to conjure forth the fair one, who held such complete possession of the most vital organ of his body. The front windows of the store were dimly illuminated with the purpose of allowing police scrutiny to prevent possible burglary. And, at the very rear end of the building, a small square glowed dimly in the black bulk of the surrounding gloom. It was the little window of the lumber room of the place, where all the little odds and ends of small value, but of great importance in the economy of the business were kept. The little lumber room carried associations of tender value to Leon's mind.

THE watcher gazed steadily at the little pallid square, his brain still obsessed with the unfulfillable longing for Rebecca.

Suddenly he winked his eyes in amazement, it seemed as though a shadow had flashed across the little window. As though something had momentarily intercepted the light that filled its square.

"My eyes must be failing me, eh?" he muttered to himself.

But no, again something interposed itself between the light and the window. Leon's heart began to palpitate excitedly. He looked at the faint square of semi-illumination as if fascinated. Then, again, a shadow crossed the window, and then the light flashed a trifle brighter for a second and then total darkness reigned for a space. "Burglars!" ejaculated the young man, overwroughtly.

Then, again, the little square glowed dimly, serenely, as before.

Leon, his heart in his throat, crossed the street in a half run, and arriving below the window, searched frantically for a means to look into the room. At first it appeared to be impossible, the window was fully twelve feet from the granitoid

pavement. He gazed about himself desperately, and then the possibilities of the thin square post that upheld the second story porch became obvious to him.

In a second he had scaled up the rough, tin sign encrusted oblong and was peering into the little room.

His eyes grew large with wonder and perplexity as he gazed, and half forgotten Yiddish ejaculations crowded to his lips.

A small, delicate glass lamp with a long, thin pedestal stood on one side of the little work-table that occupied the center of the room. The lamp was placed unevenly upon a queer, thick, unsymmetrical centerpiece, which looked very much like some coarse knitted fabric of dull red, much like the knitted hoods children wear on very cold weather. It had a peculiar unwonted appearance of slick moistness to it.

A gigantic black tomcat with twin rings around his shining, green eyes, was marching about the room excitedly, with thick tail straight up and back arched as though very proud of himself and everybody. Leon shifted his position on the post slightly and the big feline's delicate ears twitched nervously, and the phosphorescent, glaucous, glowing eyes gazed straight into his.

"Du kater!" he muttered, in fearful admiration. He was greatly puzzled at the curious scene. The cat soon resumed his excited promenade about the room, and abruptly leaped upon the table and proceeded to walk about the lamp, much as it would around the feet of some favored, sycophantic friend.

Suddenly it crouched down, and, with its keen, white teeth, began to tug at the center piece beneath the lamp with quick, vicious jerks, still eyeing the lamp in evident distrust.

THE nature of the thick, red substance became apparent to Leon. It was not wool or any other fictile material, indeed; it was meat, a thick succulent section of "round" steak!

The cat, its fear of the lamp leaving it, began a more vigorous and determined attack on the peculiar centerpiece, and before Leon could move or cry out, the meat was forcibly jerked to one side, the lamp riding totteringly and finally, at a more energetic tug, rocked too far over and crashed flickeringly into the heap of crumpled paper and rubbish that always littered the floor of the trash-room.

In less time than Leon could say Aaron Aaronsohn, the entire place was one sheet of flame, and thick, choking smoke, sparking and crackling furiously.

He released his grip on the post, half slid, half fell to the pavement, and ran tumultuously to the fire-alarm box at the corner. After a fumble or two he agitatedly succeeded in turning in the alarm.

A minute later the engines, hose-carts, towers, chemical wagons, hook and ladder trucks, and salvage corps wagons were galloping up on the fly from all directions, and getting into action without the least delay. A dense crowd materialized out of the apparent emptiness of the streets, and surged inquisitively about the burning building.

The fire had spread to the store room and, although its span of existence was extremely short after the extinguishing apparatus arrived it had lived lightningly fast, and the entire Stickenstein emporium was gutted. The crowd slowly dissolved; all but one engine rolled homeward; the momentary excitement was past.

Leon walked homeward deeply thoughtful.



Leon walked home deeply thoughtful.

The following morning when the excited, summoned Stickenstein family were alighting from the train, they found a long waiting Leon there. Papa Stickenstein nodded stiffly at the young man. He seemed to be half crying over the loss of his stock and building, but he betrayed a somewhat inconsistent gleam in his keen gray eyes as he descended the coach steps. Stickenstein, mere, next descended and took her husband's arm.

Then Rebecca.

"Good day," she said.

"Goot tay," the old lady chimed in.

"Very good morning," said Leon, winking at the old man, and taking his place beside Rebecca. The old man said nothing but scowled portentously. Rebecca very timidly and timorously took Leon's ostentatiously extended arm, and the little company proceeded on its way.

"Hafen't you gone yet?" Stickenstein pere cried suddenly, turning fiercely upon Leon. "Hafen't I got misfortune enough to loose my faluapel business, that can nefer be restored, vidout being bordered by a cheap masher like you."

"Oh! papa!" exclaimed Rebecca, deprecatingly. "I forgot to tell you," remarked Leon, maintaining his hold on Rebecca, "that your old black cat with the white rings around the eyes was half burned in the fire. Nearly all his hair came off. He jumped out of the little store-room window, with a piece of meat in his mouth; and, most wonderful of all, there was a glass lamp tied to the meat—such a red and white glass lamp, you know. Sure enough, cats do have nine lives, or he would never have escaped from that terrible fire. I took him home. He wouldn't let go of the meat or lamp, so I had to take them along, too. I didn't

let anybody see him, I was so ashamed of him. But I have him at home yet. I think he will recover, all right." Leon finished jubilantly, looking the old man into the eye.

As for him, he halted in the middle of the street, his face blue-gray, his eyes popping.

"Vor heaven's sake—!" he ejaculated.

"Rebecca and I are going to get married next month," supplemented Leon.

"Ach, I knowed it all the time!" stammered the old man, hurriedly adjusting himself to the adamant aspect of this surprising situation.

The company continued its march in undisturbed formation, with the exception that Leon's arm encircled Rebecca's lithe, unresisting waist. Rebecca said nothing, but turned a delightful pink.

After the Honey-moon

WHAT a grand feeling that is, to be settled in one's own snug home, between one's own four walls, secure in the possession of one's own, absolutely confirmed wife!

Aye, now you have her. She is in the castle, and relatives and rivals have plotted in vain. That is, if they have plotted—and of course they have, seeing you about to bear off such a prize.

She is yours. You can prove your title by the wedding certificate carefully stowed away and instantly to be produced in case your word should be questioned. Even yet outsiders may be lured by envy and jealousy to give you trouble.

Yes, she is yours. You actually have achieved what might have been deemed the impossible. Glory be!

You and she sit cosily to breakfast together, and it is nobody's business. You may kiss her good bye at the door, when you leave for down town, and that is nobody's business. And she may wave at you until the car has borne you out of sight, and this is nobody's business.

All the day you have her presence, making this newly organized home, to buoy you and inspire you to your best efforts. 'Tis a most pleasurable consciousness. And when you arrive (constantly harrowed by the thought that during your enforced absence she may have changed her mind and vanished) she greets you upon the threshold, to usher you within; the door closes behind, giving notice of your rights by ruthlessly shutting out the curious.

And while you two dine together, with none to intrude and forbid, all that has happened you must know, and all that has happened she must know, every occurrence to the one being, now in this mutual partnership, of equal interest to the other.

And after dinner it is your province husbandly to don velvet smoking jacket, which she, wifely, has sanctioned; and while she daintily embroiders near, beside the evening lamp to read extracts of moment from the paper. It is very essential that whenever you see anything in the paper which excites you to murmur "Huh!" you instantly share it with her. Thus, like any well-regulated husband sparrow you deal her tid-bits, which she proceeds to assimilate.

WHAT charming morning gowns she has, this Beulah of yours; blue gingham (or calico, or something), belted neatly about her neat waist, and just to her ankles! Trim ankles! And flowing stuff, too—belled stuff and flowing stuff each seeming to adapt itself to weather and occasion and temper. Really, it imbues you with a prideful little thrill to observe how much of a housewife she can appear; and by evening she has changed to a totally different rig, and meets you at the door in a skirtwaist or smart tailor suit, or other vastly becoming attire.

Indeed, what a lot of clothes she has, anyhow—and how queer to have them exposed, in closet and dresser drawer, to your profaning gaze. The continual existence of them, there, perfuming and abashing the masculine raiment and modestly enduring such rude company, adds to the sense of secure proprietorship. And oh, what graciousness in her to handle your wardrobe, as to the manner born; inspecting, rearranging, even wisely criticizing.

Always should your Beulah be thus; fresh and girlish and well-cared-for. Always would you gladly pay the bills, and never, never should she



By Edwin L. Sabin

be hampered. The household purse was a common purse, for each to dip into; what was yours was hers, and what was hers was yours. Some husbands, you understood, were mean about money; but you should be held up by her, proudly, to other wives, as a model. They should envy her; and no doubt their husbands would hate you. And it rather humiliates you to note what a quantity of personal supplies she has brought with her, just as if you were not anxious to furnish everything.

And always, has decided Beulah, you and she should share thoughts as well as things, and should read together and discuss. For—

"We don't want to grow careless, and lose interest in each other just because we're married," said Beulah; "like other couples."

"No, no, dearest!" responded you, in alarm.

NEVERTHELESS a man has his business. It seems not to occur to a woman that a man cannot dismiss at a moment all the day from his mind and readily, even voluntarily, become absorbed in a new pattern of silk or a bunch of roses.

Why, frequently a man—especially a man with the tremendous responsibilities of a married man—is planning, planning, figuring upon some project (as were you) which is not yet tangible enough to explain, and which yet nags and persists; and then a man is apparently unobservant (as apparently were you), although really seeing and listening, even if not outwardly enthusing.

"Isn't it?" now concluded Beulah, suddenly.

"Why—yes; certainly," you responded, vaguely but valiantly.

Beulah pouted.

"No, it isn't," she declared, to your amazement. "You weren't listening, and I knew it. What was I saying?"

"You were saying something about silk stockings—about a pair you took back. They didn't wear well." And having thus refuted her, you were encouraged to add, clinching the matter: "I heard every word."

"But that was ten minutes ago," she retorted, triumphant. "I'd got all through talking about them!"

"Well, I heard everything," you reasserted.

"What else was I saying, then?"

YOU hesitated, almost stumped. But not quite; no, indeed, not quite. A fleeting sentence flashed into your brain from your sub-consciousness.

"You were speaking of the chicken."

"What chicken?" Beulah was merciless.

"The chicken you ordered."

"What about it?"

Like a criminal in the stall you writhed, confronted and helpless. You were stuck in earnest. "Tell me again, dear," you may beseech, submissively. "I'll listen."

"Oh, no; it isn't worth repeating; truly, it isn't," she answers, with ostentatious carelessness.

Ostentatious, I say, for she wishes you to perceive how strong an effort she is making that you shall not suspect what havoc has been wrought within her trustful heart.

There is a moment of uncomfortable silence—the first uncomfortable silence, to date, in your mutual history.

"I'm sorry," you may apologize.

"Oh, you needn't be,"

responds your Beulah, brightly—all too brightly, even feverishly. "I presume that what I was saying wasn't especially exciting to you. I was only talking so

as to keep the ball rolling. It is so stupid to sit without either of us saying anything."

That may thus appeal, to her; but you have been trying to think. A married man must think, at times.

"Is it very interesting?" she queries, presently.

"Er—what, dear?"

"Is the paper very, very interesting?"

"N-no; there doesn't seem to be much in it."

"You used to read it to me—and you used to read Tennyson aloud, too," she reproaches, plaintively.

She speaks as though this past to which she refers is long, long by—whereas, according to your recollection the last reading was done only two evenings before.

You squirm.

"We're getting just like old married folks," she complains; "sitting here like bumps."

"I don't mean to be," you may defend; "only, darling, I have a matter on my mind that bothers me and I am thinking it out. See?"

"What is it?"

"Business." The important word ought to be self-explanatory and carry due weight—coming, as it does, from the bread-earner of the household.

Your Beulah, bless her, instantly is all helpfulness.

"Oh, goody! What about business? Tell me."

AGAIN are you stuck. The matter is only nebulous. If she might but appreciate.

"It—it's nothing I can make clear to you, pet. It's—it's—"

She intercepts your impotent stammering. Now she is upon her dignity. Oh, if she but would appreciate.

"You needn't tell me; of course not, if it's such a secret. I don't care to listen."

Heigh-ho, she did not appreciate.

"And I have on my red gown and you never noticed it at all, and you used to like it."

Her vanity, that innocent little vanity, also is offended.

"Certainly I noticed it; it's fine," you assert, stoutly—regarding its color. Yes, it is red. You remember. She had it on when you came home.

But dear, dear! As if that rose-leaf existence of Tennyson and red gown evenings could continue without cess, forever. Why, a man—particularly a married man—had to make money, and sometimes he had to think about it. There was a practical side as well as an ideal, to even marriage.

"And you know we agreed that you weren't to bring your business home," she reminds, still pouting. "It isn't fair—unless you'd rather have your old business than me; and you have your business all day."

Horrors! She frightens you. Is she going to leave you, cast you off—repudiate you for your

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